



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 9721 Executive Center Drive N., St. Petersburg, FL 33702

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

April 29, 2003
NR03-018

December 6, 2003, Control Date Established for the Commercial Shrimp Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico

On **April 29, 2003**, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) published an advanced notice of proposed rulemaking that established a control date of December 6, 2003, for the commercial shrimp fishery operating in the exclusive economic zone of the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf EEZ). By way of that notice, the public is advised that, in the future, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC) may consider management measures to limit entry into the shrimp fishery, and may use this control date as a qualifying criterion for participation in the fishery.

Request for Comments: Dates and Addresses

Comments on the establishment of a control date for this fishery must be submitted by **May 29, 2003**. Comments should be directed to:

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
3018 U.S. Highway 301 North, Suite 1000
Tampa, Florida 33619-2266
Fax: 813-225-7015

Background: The GMFMC anticipates that future action may be necessary to control effort in the shrimp fishery in the Gulf EEZ by restricting the number of participants. The GMFMC is concerned that the current level of participation in the fishery may be greater than the participation level that would maximize the economic benefits that could be derived from the resource.

Should the GMFMC take future action to restrict participation in the fishery, they may use December 6, 2003, as a possible control date. As of December 5, 2002, all commercial vessels that fish for shrimp in

the Gulf EEZ must have a commercial vessel permit onboard. Establishing a control date of December 6, 2003, will ensure that all participants who are active in the fishery in 2003 will have acquired their permits.

The public would have several opportunities to comment on any future action to restrict participation in the fishery. The GMFMC would be accepting comment during its deliberations on any such future action, and once the action was submitted for review and implementation to the Secretary of Commerce, NOAA Fisheries would also request public comment on the proposed action.

The public is reminded that establishment of this control date does not commit the GMFMC or NOAA Fisheries to any particular management regime or criteria for entry into the commercial shrimp fishery. Fishermen are not guaranteed future participation in any fishery regardless of their entry date or intensity of participation in the fishery before or after the control date. Use of the control date in future management actions would mean that anyone who entered the fishery after the control date would not be assured of future access. Nevertheless, fishermen who were permitted prior to the control date are not guaranteed future participation in the fishery, either. The GMFMC may choose to give consideration to fishermen who were active before and after the control date, based on other criteria, such as landings and sales. The GMFMC subsequently may choose a different control date or they may choose a management regime that does not make use of a control date. The GMFMC also may choose to take no further action to control participation in the fishery, in which case the control date may be rescinded.

To obtain considerable recorded information about NOAA Fisheries missions, services, and management measures, call our toll free public service line at 1-866-570-5301. If the information you need is not available, leave a message, and we will return your call.

This and other news releases are available on the Southeast Regional Office homepage at <http://caldera.sero.nmfs.gov/>.

NOAA Fisheries is an agency of the Department of Commerce.